

In February alone, more than 72,000 migrants were removed under title 42. Admittedly, it is a small number, but it is a significant number when you consider what happens when title 42 goes away because once it disappears, we will have to process, house, and care for every single one of those individuals.

When we inevitably run out of space, which will happen quickly, I expect the administration will start releasing migrants into the interior of the country at an unprecedented pace, and once that happens, even more migration will follow. This is simply one of the pull factors or the message that is sent; that if you violate our immigration laws, as long as you make it to the border—because the cartels, the transnational criminal organizations, have figured out if they can overwhelm our border patrols, they can make more money, and more and more people will be able to illegally migrate into the United States.

The transnational criminal organizations that continue to get rich because of the Biden border policies know that frontline officers and agents are busy processing and caring for migrants and in many cases unaccompanied children, which creates a golden opportunity for the cartels to move dangerous drugs into the country. They are moving drugs like fentanyl, synthetic opioids, heroin, and other dangerous drugs across the border and into communities all across the country, from Maine to Texas, to California, to New York—all across the country.

We lost about 70,000 Americans last year alone to fentanyl, and the U.S.-Mexico border is the primary gateway for fentanyl and these other illicit drugs. Securing the border is the key to stopping this overdose epidemic, and restoring some sense of order when it comes to migration. This needs to be a top priority here in the Senate, and, as I said a moment ago, with the expiration of title 42, a bad situation is getting ready to get worse.

These are just a few of the major tasks on the Senate's to-do list, and unfortunately this Chamber has wasted a lot of time. But since the beginning of this year, the majority leader hasn't allowed the Senate to actually spend much time legislating. We have confirmed a number of nominees and passed a few resolutions to nullify outlandish rules that were rolled out by the Biden administration. We unanimously passed a resolution designating January as "National Trafficking and Modern Slavery Prevention Month." The Senate passed a bill to repeal the Iraq war authorization, as if President Biden can be expected to use that authorization to declare some sort of military conflict or war someplace in the Middle East or elsewhere—something I doubt he would do.

Given Congress's long to-do list and the fact that we are 3½ months into the year, what I just recounted is a very slim list of accomplishments. I

hoped this work period would prompt a change and we could start working on important, time-sensitive tasks that need to be completed. Unfortunately, here again, we are not off to a great start.

Rather than bringing up legislation to address the debt ceiling or the border crisis or any one of a number of other problems facing American families, Senator SCHUMER has announced that this week, we will vote on a partisan resolution. The majority leader tried to frame this resolution as a way to defend the rule of law, but it is a nonbinding resolution. It fails to do anything other than send a political message.

The majority leader has been a fierce critic of similar resolutions in the past. During the summer of 2020, our colleague from Arkansas, Senator COTTON, authored a straightforward resolution to clarify that the Senate called for justice for George Floyd and opposed efforts to defund the police—both simple and straightforward points of, I would think, nearly unanimous agreement. But unfortunately the resolution didn't pass because it was—guess what—blocked by Senator SCHUMER. At the time, he said:

The resolution by my friend will do nothing. Nothing. It is rhetoric.

Well, that was Senator SCHUMER less than 3 years ago when he blocked a nonbinding resolution that denounced efforts to defund the police. Now that he has the power to set the schedule in the Senate, Senator SCHUMER could bring any bill to the floor that he wanted. That is the prerogative of the majority leader. He could schedule votes on actual bills. We could actually have votes on amendments to those bills and a fulsome debate, and we could take real action to support our law enforcement officers and defend the rule of law. But he refuses to bring that sort of bill to the floor—instead, just an empty statement or political message.

If the majority leader wants to issue statements on his own time, that is his prerogative, but he shouldn't continue to waste valuable floor time on purely partisan messaging that does absolutely nothing. The American people sent us here to work on their behalf, and it is high time the majority leader decided to take that responsibility seriously and bring important legislation that will solve real problems to the floor of the United States Senate.

As our friend Lamar Alexander, the former Senator from Tennessee, liked to say: It is not easy to get here, and it is not easy to stay here—because we have elections every 6 years—but while you are here, you might as well do something important. You might as well make a difference.

I fear we are not doing that by the sort of agenda setting and political messaging that the majority leader is endorsing, but it is something I dare say the vast majority of Senators would relish—doing exactly that kind

of work and solving real problems for the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, just before Easter, the Biden administration released a report that they claim vindicates their role in our disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, but rather than laying out the facts and embracing accountability, the Biden administration returned to its default setting of blaming Donald Trump for their problems. They claim that because Trump did not provide them with a plan for every contingency, the Biden White House should be allowed to wash its hands of the mess they have made.

Now, you would think that anyone who witnessed mothers throwing their children over barbed wire fences and into the arms of our soldiers would at least hesitate before making excuses for the terrible decision making that led to those images. Biden and his team are kidding themselves if they think we have forgotten what happened. But the American people are not fooled. They remember that it was Joe Biden who chose to close Bagram Airfield; that it was Joe Biden who set an arbitrary evacuation deadline even though his military generals begged him not to do this; and that it was Joe Biden who surrendered control of Karzai International Airport and handed over the names of American citizens, green card holders, and our Afghan partners—handed this information over to the Taliban.

We saw the catastrophe unfold at the airfields and in the cities, and we see what the Biden administration has done. They have ignored it ever since. Afghanistan fell back into the Dark Ages. Twenty-three million people are going hungry. Twenty million Afghan women are subjugated under the Taliban's medieval boot.

On the day the evacuation officially ended, there were at least 4,000 Americans left behind—that is right, left behind—in Afghanistan. Today, our best guess is that there are around 175 still stranded there. Some of them are being held captive by the Taliban. Seventy-eight thousand of our Afghan partners remain in hiding, many being hunted by the Taliban. Yes, that is the mess that this administration and Joe Biden made.

And on his way out the door, Biden also left behind at least \$7.2 billion of American weaponry, including aircraft, vehicles, and guns, some of which have cropped up in the hands of militants in other countries. That is \$7.2 billion of

equipment, part of the \$80 billion investment there at Bagram Airfield.

And what did Joe Biden do? Here you go, Bagram—the investment in training, the investment in the troops, the investment in infrastructure, and all of that equipment.

Just imagine for a moment that you are one of our allies watching all of this unfold. It would cause you to be worried—and rightfully so.

Biden's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan damaged America's image on the world stage and sent once-strong alliances into a tailspin. Some of our most important allies now believe that the United States is weak, that we are unreliable, and that we are undependable.

This is what has emboldened what I term the new axis of evil—China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. They think they have got running room because of the way the Afghan withdrawal was conducted.

Beijing wasted no time normalizing relations with the Taliban by offering multimillion-dollar investments through the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. The CCP knows what it is doing here. Afghanistan has \$1 trillion in untapped resources that communist China has already signed a deal to extract. Since then, they have increased their aggression against Taiwan and elsewhere around the globe, and the Biden administration has had very little to say about it—an emboldened China going after the \$1 trillion in lithium in Afghanistan—rare-earth minerals, Afghanistan. That is why the Chinese Communist Party has inked that deal.

Oh, what did they do with it? Let's make chips. Let's make batteries.

Oh, what are we making those batteries for? Electric vehicles.

How about that? How about that? This is what has emboldened the CCP.

Afghanistan was a disaster. It was based on the decision making of this administration. So the CCP is encouraging Russia, Iran, and North Korea to join them in that axis of evil and push to global dominance.

The CCP even let a spy balloon sashay all the way across this country. We know it pulled intelligence. We know it went across much of our critical infrastructure.

What did my colleagues across the aisle have to say? Not much. Not much. They don't want to challenge the CCP and communist China, and Russia and Iran and North Korea. It makes you wonder.

Meanwhile, North Korea has leaned into their ballistic missile program, and Iran has openly celebrated a dangerous milestone: They are now technically capable of building multiple nuclear weapons. That is right. They are pushing their nuclear development program.

Not to be outdone, just 6 months after Biden surrendered to the Taliban, Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine and launched the biggest land war in Eu-

rope since World War II. This is not a coincidence.

Biden knows he has no one to blame but himself and his officials for this. This is the mess they have made because of the decisions that they have made.

But there has been no accountability. There has been no justice for the 13 servicemembers murdered by terrorists during those final chaotic days in Kabul. I think it is clear that, if things keep going the way they are, there won't be accountability because this administration will not admit they made a mistake.

If there is any truth to be gleaned from the administration's report, it is that Joe Biden hasn't learned any lessons from what will certainly be remembered as one of the worst foreign policy disasters in our Nation's history.

The Biden administration will go down in history for failing our allies and our partners. They are questioning—they are questioning—if they should be our ally and partner.

The Biden administration will be remembered for destroying what was a robust economy, kowtowing to social justice warriors, and, of course, committing to outrageous policy proposals that insult the intelligence of the American people.

The Department of Homeland Security's recent budget request is no exception to the rule. This year, instead of asking for more money to equip law enforcement and secure our southern border, Joe Biden and Secretary Mayorkas decided to undercut that mission by \$600 million. That is right. The border is wide open. We have a Secretary of Homeland Security who does not believe in securing the homeland. So what does the Secretary and the President do? They cut the budget for securing the border by \$600 million. This is something that is so unfair to our Border Patrol.

We are only halfway through the fiscal year, and already Customs and Border Protection has recorded more than 1 million migrant encounters at the southern border. That is right—1 million that they have encountered. That is not counting the "got-aways"—the ones they can see but can't get to, or the ones that later they find where they have been but they could not get to them, didn't know about them. This is 1 million encounters on that border.

They have also seized 105,000 pounds of drugs, including enough fentanyl to kill several cities—almost 11,000 pounds of fentanyl in 5 short months. And get this: They caught 268 gang members, more than 11,000 criminal noncitizens, and almost 300 terrorists trying to sneak into this country.

Those are not my numbers. Those are not some pundit's numbers. Those are the stats that are coming from the Department of Homeland Security and the Border Patrol. Those are their numbers. They are telling us this.

Do people agree with this? Do they think this is secure border policy?

Listen to these numbers again: 105,000 pounds of drugs, 11,000 pounds of fentanyl, 268 gang members, and 11,000 criminal noncitizens. Those are people who have been convicted of crimes. These are the people who are being turned out of the jails in countries. Last year, 176 different countries had people present at that southern border. This year, so far, you have got 11,000 criminal noncitizens and almost 300 terrorists trying to come into this country.

Ask yourself a question: What in heaven's name do you think they are coming here for? Why are they sneaking into the country? Do you think it is because they know they wouldn't be able to come in? Do you think they are coming for a job, or are they coming to do us harm?

We should be outraged—outraged—and concerned.

Alarms should be blaring at the Department of Homeland Security. Right now, the Biden administration is just rolling out the red carpet. They are issuing an open invitation. Indeed, they said: We have got an app to make it easy for you to come. Go on your iPhone. Sign in on the app. We will be waiting for you when you get here.

Does that sound like securing the country? Criminal noncitizens, terrorists, gang members—these are the people who are coming in, cartel smugglers who are taking this administration up on their invitation: Come on in.

Every year, in Tennessee, I visit with each one of our 95 counties. I am on the ground in every county in the State. And this year, without exception, there are mayors and sheriffs and other officials who I am speaking with, talking with principals, talking with citizens. And do you know what? Border security comes up in every single one of these meetings, and the reason it comes up is because of this administration's policies turning every town into a border town and every State into a border State. And now it is the local officials and local law enforcement officers who are left to deal with the broken policies of this administration.

If you ask them what the biggest problem is, they are going to tell you: Well, MARSHA, it connects back to the border because the drugs we are apprehending are coming across the southern border, and 95 percent of those drugs, they are fentanyl, and that drives crime in our communities. There are gang members coming into these communities.

Now, here is a great example of this: Hamilton County, TN. That is Chattanooga, a great city. And their district attorney, Coty Wamp, and Sheriff Garrett there in Hamilton County were showing me some pictures from one of their drug busts. Well, these are rainbow fentanyl pills that were specifically manufactured to look like OxyContin—rainbow fentanyl.

Now, officers there in Chattanooga found more than 1,000 of these pills in a single search. That is enough to take

out the entire city of Chattanooga, TN. They weren't expecting to find fentanyl when they were executing that warrant, but that doesn't mean they were surprised. This is a persistent problem in Chattanooga.

Thank goodness, a great sheriff and a great DA working together—great officers—they conducted this bust, and this is what they found. And we have great local law enforcement all across the State of Tennessee. And they will tell you that fentanyl overdose deaths are occurring at such a rate that law enforcement does not have all the resources they need to investigate all the cases.

Now, this is just one story from one law enforcement entity in one city; but the danger is, this is occurring in every city, in every county, in each of our States. And it is happening because President Biden and my Democratic colleagues have refused to support securing the border, and they refuse to hold themselves accountable for the humanitarian crisis that this has created.

When Secretary Becerra testified before the Finance Committee about the Department of Health and Human Services budget request, he betrayed the same disregard for basic human decency as Secretary Mayorkas had. He used the opportunity to push his woke agenda items rather than focusing on poor operations of the Agency. Frankly, it is sad that there is even a question about whether a Senate-confirmed secretary is familiar with his own job description, especially when he can't answer basic questions about what is happening at the Agency he, supposedly, controls.

At the end of February, the New York Times reported that over the course of Joe Biden's Presidency, his administration has lost—that is right, lost—more than 85,000 children who were under the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. You heard me right. This administration has lost 85,000 children who were under the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. To be clear, this is the office within the Department of Health and Human Services that is directly responsible for unaccompanied children who come across the border. And now we know that this Agency has lost immediate contact with one third of the children they are responsible for.

The Times also reported that the Office of Refugee Resettlement may have approved sponsors who were under investigation for labor abuses and that case management officers may have been aware of children in dangerous situations but chose to do nothing.

During his hearing, I asked Secretary Becerra about this, frankly, horrifying revelation, and he did exactly what his compatriots have done when confronted with their failures: He feigned ignorance. He claimed he had never heard of those 85,000 missing children.

Joe Biden and the Democrats might be happy to pretend that we don't have

a problem down on the border, but the American people are not pretending that this is not a problem. They watched President Biden throw away border security policies that were working in favor of an open-borders agenda that benefits no one except the drug cartels; the sex trafficking rings that are abusing women and girls; the human traffickers that are smuggling people, preying on people, and physically, mentally, emotionally, drugging and sexually abusing them as they make their journey.

It is time to put politics aside and get serious about securing this border, and I encourage my colleagues: Please, join us in securing this border. Join us in saying let's enforce the laws we have on the books. Join us in saying let's eliminate the policies that incentivize breaking the law. Let's stand for the rule of law.

Earlier this year, I introduced the Stop Taxpayer Funding of Traffickers Act, which would prohibit anyone charged with drug or human trafficking from receiving Federal government benefits while they await trial. We could pass this bill today, and we should pass it because it would make a difference.

When I talked to local law enforcement, when I said, "What would be a way to help?" this is the idea they gave me. It is a problem that they have because many of these traffickers are getting government benefits, and we need to stop that today.

We should also return to the "Remain in Mexico" policy. We should end catch-and-release. And last but not least, let's get back to building that barrier. Border Patrol has told us for 30 years they need a physical barrier where they can have a barrier, and where they can't, they need better technology, they need more officers, more agents, more manpower and resources so that they can do their job, so they can protect this Nation's sovereignty, so they can protect our citizens.

That is it. These are the things that would be a solution to helping rid this country of this fentanyl crisis, to helping rid this country of the gangs, the terrorists that are flooding into our country, the criminals coming into this country. This is something that should have bipartisan agreement. We should do this.

Now, the Biden administration has touted its various White House staff and Cabinet nominees as being the most diverse in our Nation's history, but they all have one thing in common: Their priorities are at odds with what the American people are saying they want.

Secretary Mayorkas refuses to do his job and secure the border, even though local law enforcement officials are begging him for help. Secretary Becerra can't be bothered to offer so much as a talking point on behalf of 85,000 missing children. Attorney General Garland has weaponized the law against con-

servatives and created two tiers of justice: one for the liberal elites and one for everybody else.

Biden's nominee to lead the FAA withdrew in disgrace. His most recent nominee to the FCC has dedicated her career to violating the First Amendment. His Transportation Secretary is perpetually missing in action. And the Pentagon has yet to hold anyone accountable for one of the worst foreign policy disasters in American history. And, yes, that would be Afghanistan.

The mainstream media loves to complain that the American people have lost all faith in institutions, but I would ask that media to just stop, look at what Joe Biden's government has done to the country, and ask themselves: Are we safer and more secure than we were 4 years ago?

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 19, Radha Iyengar Plumb, of New York, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Amy Klobuchar, Jeanne Shaheen, Brian Schatz, Benjamin L. Cardin, Edward J. Markey, Alex Padilla, Margaret Wood Hassan, Catherine Cortez Masto.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Radha Iyengar Plumb, of New York, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ), and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) would